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JOIN ME IN A PLASTIC-BAG FREE WEEKEND

Sharon Grierson urges fellow Novocastrians to join her in giving up plastic shopping bags for the weekend and swapping to calico bags instead - for the sake of our environment.

National Science and Planet Ark are hosting a nationwide *Plastic Bag Famine*. All Australians are invited to take part, and see if they can get through an entire weekend without using a single bag.

I've signed the pledge to be bag-free this weekend, and I encourage everyone in Newcastle to give it a go, and make this the first plastic bag-free electorate in Australia.

To help people make the swap to calico bags, I will be distributing calico bags at shopping centres throughout the electorate on Saturday 21 August.

Australian shoppers use approximately 6.9 billion plastic bags each year. Plastic bags clog up our rivers and pollute our oceans; they kill our wildlife and increase the demand for landfills. They are bad news for the environment.

A recent Hunter Valley Research Foundation survey showed that the majority of Hunter households were concerned about the impact of plastic bags on the environment.

Respondents believed that households and supermarkets are most responsible for reducing plastic bag usage, but a quarter of respondents also thought government should take a lead.

Labor wants retailers and the community to act on its own goodwill and phase down the use of plastic carry bags. But if voluntary measures don't achieve an end to the use of plastic carry bags, a Latham Labor government will step in and legislate a ban on free-of-charge, single use, plastic check-out bags. This will happen in 2007.

Join me in giving up plastic bags for the weekend and make the move to calico for a more sustainable future. Let's show respect for the landscape our kids will inherit.

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